



**Cooperative Extension Service**  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**Ornamentals and Flowers**  
**Mar. 2008**  
**OF-41**

# Perennial Bedding Plants for Hawai'i

Melvin Wong

Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

People from the U.S. mainland make up a large part of the population of Hawai'i. They are used to using bedding plants for landscaping. Most bedding plants are annuals. In Hawai'i, people do not like to replant every year. Mums, marigold, and petunias are popular, but they are annuals.

My favorite perennial bedding plants for Hawai'i are illustrated in this publication. I included many plants that grow taller than most bedding plants. Research should be done to evaluate bedding plants and their ability to grow as perennials. The list of plants was made from observations made as I was consulting on landscape problems.

The following list of plants mentioned in this publication may help you to find perennial bedding plants for Hawai'i. This is not a complete list. Add or subtract according to your preference for a plant's aesthetic quality, growth habit, and maintenance characteristics.

## Perennial bedding plants mentioned in this publication

*Agapanthus africanus minor* (Peter Pan lily)  
*Anthurium andraeanum* (anthurium)  
*Ardesia crenata* (Hilo holly)  
*Aster laevis* (aster)  
*Begonia* spp. (begonia)  
*Canna* spp. (canna)  
*Catharanthus roseus rant* (Madagascar periwinkle)  
*Coreopsis lanceolata* (lance coreopsis)  
*Costus productus*  
*Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora* (Montbretia)  
*Cuphea hyssopifolia* (false heather)

*Curcuma zedoaria*  
*Dichorisandra thyrsifolia* (pruned blue ginger)  
*Dietis bicolor*  
*Evolvulus glomeratus* subsp. *glandiflorus* (blue daze)  
*Fuchsia* 'Black Prince'  
*Gazania rigens* (gazania)  
*Gazania rigens* var. *leucolaena* (trailing gazania)  
*Gerbera jamasonii x viridifolia* (gerbera)  
*Gomphrena globosa* (globe amaranth or bozu)  
*Heliconia orthotricha* (orthotricha heliconia)  
*Heliconia psittacorum* (psittacorum heliconia)  
*Hem ero callis* spp. (daylily)  
*Hydrangea macrophylla* (hydrangea)  
*Impatiens hawkeri* (New Guinea impatiens)  
*Impatiens wallerana* (common impatiens)  
*Ixora* 'Thai Dwarf' (Thai dwarf ixora)  
*Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* (kalanchoe)  
*Lantana camara* (lantana)  
*Lantana montevidensis* (trailing lantana)  
*Neomarica gracilis* (walking iris)  
*Polargonium x hortorum* (geranium)  
*Portulaca grandiflora* (moss rose)  
*Sida fallax* ('ilima papa)  
*Spathiphyllum floribundum* (spathiphyllum)  
*Tillandsia cyanea* (cyanea tillandsia)  
*Tillandsia tricolor* (tricolor tillandsia)  
*Tropaeolum majus* (nasturtium)  
*Tulbagia violacea* (society garlic)  
*Turnera ulmifolia* (yellow alder)  
*Verbena x hybrida* (peruvian verbena)  
*Zephranthus citrina* (yellow rain lily)  
*Zephranthus grandiflora* (large pink rain lily)



Gerbera requires good drainage and irrigation that avoids the wetting of the foliage to avoid fungal diseases. They are usually grown as winter bedding plants and can be found with the flower colors of white, peach, pink, yellow, orange, or red. They do well in sunny areas but not where exposed to salty air. They are used as potted plants or groundcovers. The flowers have a good shelf life and are sometimes used as lei flowers.



Lance coreopsis does well as a groundcover in the hot, dry climate of the Pearl City Urban Garden Center. Most cultivars are yellow but are sometimes found with bicolored flowers splashed with brown or rusty red. They are easily grown from seed. The flowers are long lasting and are sometimes used for leis. In sunny areas insect problems and diseases are not prevalent.





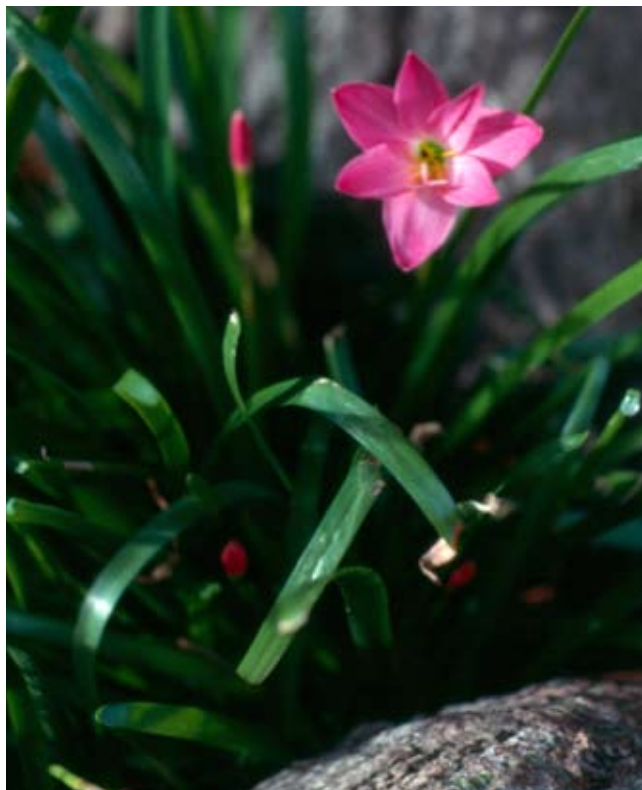
Kalanchoe (above) is commonly identified as *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*, but these plants are probably hybrids among *K. blossfeldiana*, *K. pumila*, and *K. flammea*. Kalanchoe blooms during the short days of fall and winter. As with poinsettia, light during the night can interfere with their flowering. In Hawai'i, kalanchoe can be grown outdoors in rock gardens and as groundcovers. Most are sold as potted plants during the holiday season. Mealybug can be a problem if not controlled. Kalanchoe seems to be sensitive to many pesticides.



New Guinea and common impatiens (right) are showy plants with attractive foliage and flowers that seem to bloom constantly. They suffer from root-knot nematode, broad mite, and viruses. They do well in wet areas, but the fruits eventually explode and spread the seed invasively. Severely cutting back the foliage often results in dead plants. Broad mites do well during the wet and cool winter months. The foliage will be distorted from the broad mite feeding so much during winter that some maintenance workers remove the plants during this period and replant after the winter.



Aster (above) is a perennial herb that flowers in late summer and fall. The flowers have lavender or blue rays and yellow centers. They do well in Hawai'i, with few if any insect or disease problems. They make attractive groundcovers with a lavender or blue accent. They can be multiplied by division of established plants.



The large pink and yellow rain lilies (right) are attractive in rock gardens. They go dormant during the hot, and dry summer months and come back after heavy rains. These plants are multiplied from bulbs.







Madagascar periwinkle (above) looks like it requires a lot of water, but it is a xeriscapic plant. Do not plant it too close or wet the foliage too much to avoid the foliar *Phytophthora* disease. Spider mites can also be a problem. The two most common colors of flowers are white with a red center ('Little Bright Eyes', above right) and red-purple with a darker eye ('Little Pinkie').



Globe amaranth, or bozu, comes in several colors (purple, white, and apricot), with purple the most common. The flowers are used in lei because they dry well and retain their color. The plant is often used as a groundcover in sunny areas.



Geranium, once established, is xeriscapic. It is often used in hanging baskets and as a groundcover. This perennial summer bedding plant can be propagated from cuttings.

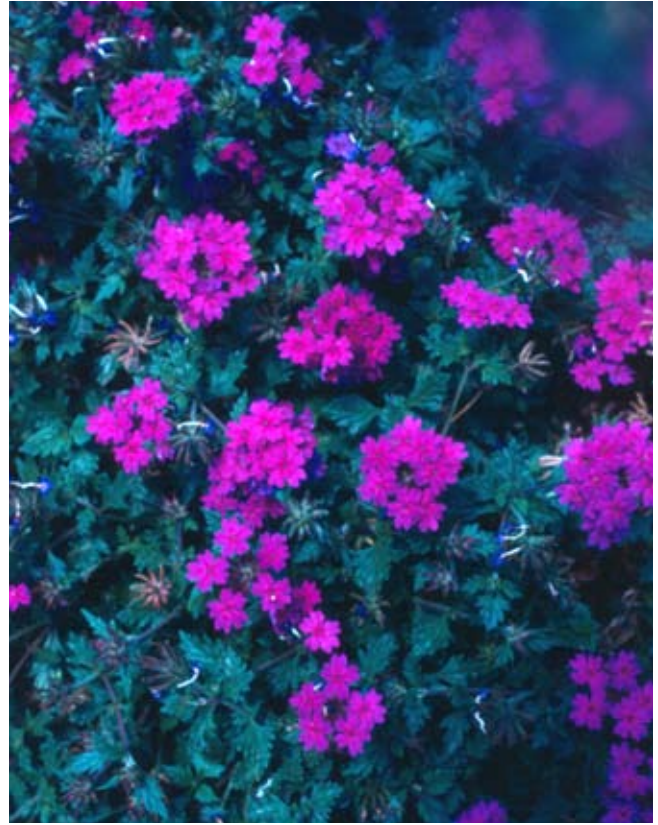


Moss rose is used in hanging baskets, a groundcover, and a bedding plant. Flowers are prevalent most of the year and come in rose, red, white, and yellow. Moss rose needs a sunny area and good drainage.

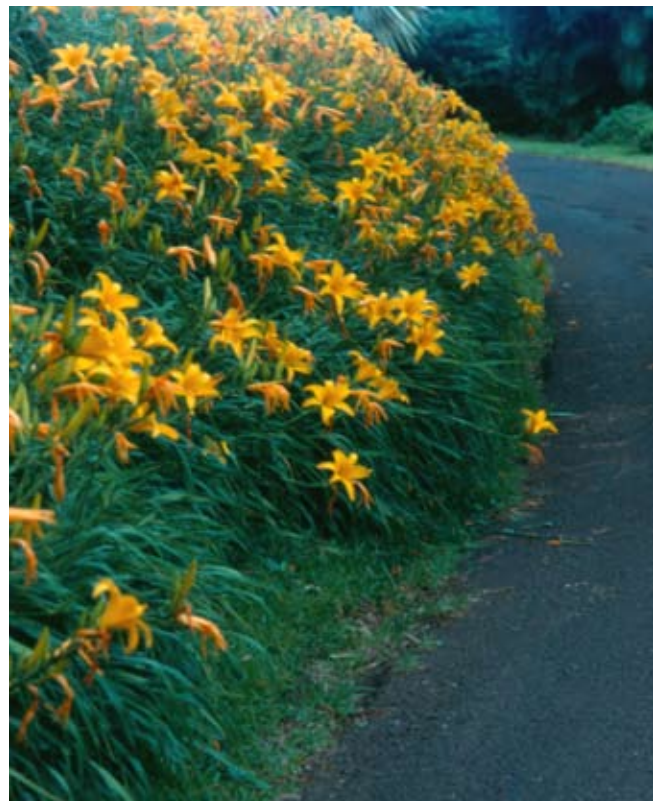




Peruvian verbena is a low groundcover with red, scarlet, blue, or purple flowers. It prefers sun, heat, and well-drained soils. You can find an example at the Pearl City Urban Garden Center.



Daylily, the common orange or yellow forms, does much better than the new hybrid forms. The flowers are edible and are shipped in from Asia in the dried form. The common forms are very vigorous and adaptable to many environmental conditions. They flower during the spring and summer. Daylily is used mostly as a border plant. A good example of a planting can be found next to the driveway leading to the office of the Lyon Arboretum.







Lantana (above and right) and trailing lantana (below) are widely adaptable and prefer full sun. Lantana was and is very invasive on cattle ranches. Lantana flowers come in white, yellow, orange and yellow, and red and yellow. Lantana and trailing lantana are used mostly as borders and groundcovers. The most common color of the flowers of trailing lantana is purple.







Ilima papa is a native plant predominantly used as a groundcover. A very attractive form from Kaua'i has dark green leaves. It flowers most of the year. The color of the flowers ranges from yellow to orange. It is becoming a common groundcover in the landscape industry.



Hydrangea is not seen often in Hawai'i landscaping but can be grown here. Hydrangea is blue under acidic soil conditions and pink under alkaline soil conditions. For example, grown in Mililani under acidic soil conditions, the flowers are blue. It grows a little taller than most bedding plants.



Canna is a vigorous, low shrub that is sometimes hard to kill on farms. The flowers of canna come in many colors. Some forms of canna are used as aquatic plants.



Gazania (above) is the non-trailing form with flowers of several colors. *Gazania rigens* var. *leucolaena* (trailing gazania, right) is a trailing form with yellow flowers that is commonly used in landscaping. Both do well in full sun and well drained soil.

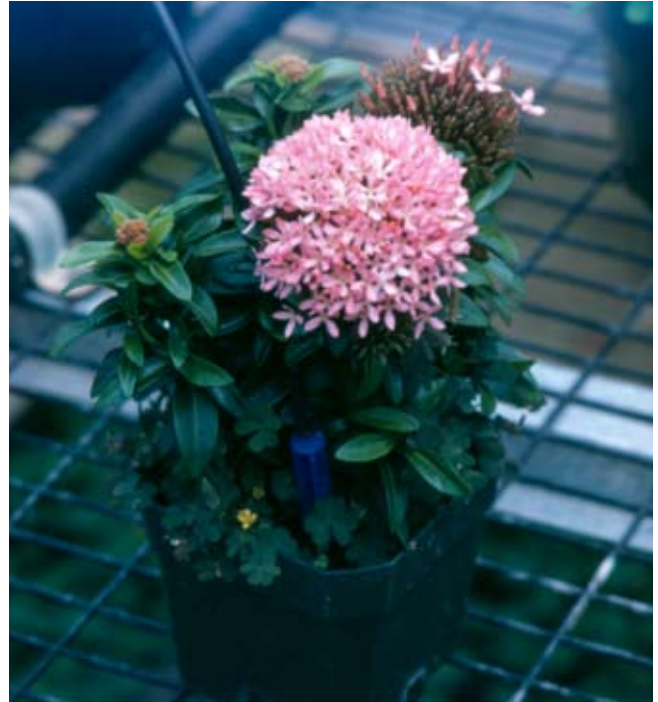


Black prince fuchsia is used for hanging baskets and can be grown as a groundcover. Alton Hendrickson discovered that this fuchsia can be grown in Hawai'i conditions. The flowers are dark red.





Miniature roses can be grown in Hawai'i. My favorite type of miniature rose has dark green leaves and dark yellow flowers. Like all roses, they have many problems, such as rose beetle, powdery mildew, spider mite, and black spot. Roses are often used for haku lei.



Thai dwarf ixora plants are used as groundcovers and as bedding plants. Some of the colors available are red, orange, gold, pink, and yellow. Minor element deficiency can be a serious problem. Avoid alkaline media and fertilizers high in phosphorus. These plants can be grown in full sun.



Blue daze is a popular groundcover even though it often becomes chlorotic as it ages. One of the possible causes of the chlorosis is minor element deficiency. Avoid alkaline soils and high-phosphorus fertilizers.



False heather is a vigorous ground-cover that can be used as a bedding plant. There are purple and white flower forms. The seeds can easily spread to adjacent areas, germinate, and become a problem.



Tricolor tillandsia, like many tillandsias, can be grown with little or no medium. I have seen it grown successfully on a stone wall in Mānoa. It can be combined with other plants with fine texture and a touch of red for a good landscape design.



*Cyanea tillandsia* can also grow epiphytically and has an attractive pink flower. It prefers to grow in the shade.





Ma'o hao hele, or Rock's Kaua'i hibiscus (Fig. 29), can be grown as a groundcover. The flowers have yellow leaf blades with purple-black throats. It is one of the native hibiscuses. It does well in full sun and has few insect and disease pests.

*Costus productus* (Fig. 30) is a very attractive tropical groundcover or shrub with orange flowers. I do not know the common name for this plant. It can be used in semi-shade conditions. It does not seem to have many pest problems.





*Psittacorum heliconia* (Fig. 31) has numerous cultivars. I like 'St. Vincent Red', 'Sassy', 'Strawberries and Cream', 'Flamingo', 'Coverden', 'Barbara', and 'Pink and Green'. They are a little tall to be called bedding plants, but they produce numerous flowers with few pest problems. Most of them can grow in semi-shade or full sun. The plant spreads quickly through underground rhizomes.





Pruned blue ginger is very attractive, with blue flowers that bloom all at once if the plant is pruned close to the ground after flowering. If the plants are not pruned, they become tall and straggly. They can be grown in full sun or semi-shade. They suffer from few pests. They are not true gingers.



Peter Pan lily is a dwarf type of *Agepanthus* that makes an attractive groundcover. I have seen it growing well in upper Mānoa. Maybe it prefers wetter and cooler conditions.



*Anthurium* has many species and cultivars with many different shapes and colors. The bract is what most people consider the flower. Anthuriums are hard to grow in landscapes because exceptional drainage is required to avoid *Pythium* root rot and soft rot. In commercial anthurium farms, several feet of cinders serve as the rooting medium. It is very difficult to grow anthuriums on most soils used for landscaping. In addition, most anthuriums require 80% or more shade.

*Curcuma zedoaria* is an attractive groundcover or low shrub that produces maroon flowers from the ground in the spring. After flowering, the plants go into dormancy. *Curcuma* is a genus in the Zingiberaceae family (ginger family). The leaves are also attractive, with purple mid-veins. To avoid soil disease problems, the soil should drain well.







*Spathiphyllum* has white flowers similar in shape to anthurium. *Spathiphyllum* plants require shade and can be forced to bloom together with the use of giberellins. *Spathiphyllum* is commonly used in landscaping where there is adequate shade. A major disease is *Cylindrocladium* root and petiole rot. When exposed to sun, the foliage and flowers will show necrotic areas.



*Orthotricha heliconia* has dwarf varieties that have attractive flowers. Roy Yamakawa, as a CTAHR extension agent on Kaua'i, named several of these varieties.



Walking iris is a plant that looks like an iris, with white and purple flowers. The plant requires substantial shade. New plants will result where flowers once were.



Society garlic is attractive next to rocks in a rock garden. The foliage resembles chive, but the flowers are lilac in color. It can be grown in partial shade or full sun.



Montretia has foliage resembling iris, and orange flowers. It does well in full sun but can spread aggressively.





*Dietis bicolor* is another plant that is often used in Japanese rock gardens. It has yellow flowers and can be used in full sun. Maintenance workers dislike it because it has a scale problem that is hard to control.



Nasturtium has edible flowers of several colors: yellow, cream, white, orange, pink, maroon, and red. It grows easily from seed. Many varieties are available. It is a sprawling ground-cover. In hot climates, plant seeds where afternoon shade is available. Aphids can be a problem.



Begonias (Fig. 43) are often planted, even though powdery mildew is a problem. There are many types and varieties with different requirements.



Yellow alder has yellow flowers and bright green foliage. If it is allowed to grow tall, it will be straggly. Prune it to keep it low, and it will be a tight groundcover. It prefers full sun.



Hilo holly is more a shrub than a bedding plant. It is included here because of its striking, dark green, glossy leaves and bright red fruits. It should be planted in partial shade. It is best grown in Hawai'i in wet, cool areas, even though it is recommended as a xeriscapic plant in Florida. It can be invasive next to wet forests.

## Resources

- Berry, Fred, and W. John Kress. 1991. *Heliconia*. Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington and London.
- Chapman, Timothy Sean. 1995. *Ornamental gingers*. Timothy Sean Chapman Press, 6920 Bayou Paul Road, St. Gabriel, Louisiana 70776.
- Chase, A R. 1987. *Compendium of ornamental foliage plant diseases*. The American Phytopathological Society Press, 3340 Pilot Knob Road, St. Paul, Minnesota 55121.
- Creasy, Rosalind. 1999. *Edible flower garden*. Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd., 153 Milk Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02109.
- Horst, R. Kenneth. 1983. *Compendium of Rose Diseases*. The American Phytopathological Society Press, 3340 Pilot Knob Road, St. Paul, Minnesota 55121.
- Isley, Paul T. 1987. *Tillandsia*. Botanical Press. Gardena, California 90249.
- Neal, Marie C. 1965. *In gardens of Hawaii*. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu.
- Rauch, Fred D., and Paul R. Weissich. 2000. *Plants for tropical landscapes*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.